



## **Career Resources for International Students**

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## Writing Cover Letters

### Tips for International Students

#### Tips on Cover Letter Content

- Write from the reader's point of view, with the goal to meet the employer's needs as related to the targeted position.
- Focus on the needs of the employer and how you can meet them. Write an attention-getting introduction that invites, informs, and attracts the reader to seek more information.
- Write confidently and share just enough specific information to spark the interest of the reader to want to find out more about you on your résumé.
- In the first paragraph, state the position for which you are applying, how you learned of it, and why you are attracted to the employer.
- In the second paragraph, point out at least three relevant qualifications which highlight why you are uniquely suited for the job. Do not repeat the contents of your résumé, which can be easily found. Instead, be personable and cite specific reasons or examples of your qualifications that are explained further on your résumé.
- In the third paragraph, state why you are right for this job. Use the paragraph to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and their goals. Familiarize yourselves with information about the company or the industry to show the employer that you are serious about your application and informed about the type of work and experience that it requires.
- In the closing paragraph, ask for an interview! Let the employer know of your intent to make contact within the next few weeks. But be sure to follow up once the résumé and letter have been received.
- Use facts and examples as evidence of your qualifications in order to help the reader envision you making valuable contributions to the organization. The statement "can initiate and accomplish tasks with little direction," has more credibility by adding "and independently set up the operation of organization's Web site."

- Limit sentences to seven or eight words. Limit the paragraphs in the body of the letter to four or five sentences. Letters that are too lengthy take too much of the reader's time; show the employer that you can write with clarity and brevity.
- Tailor your letter to the needs of the employer and the requirements of the position. Use the position announcement and company literature for clues about what to stress and keywords to include.
- Say complimentary things about yourself, but paint an accurate picture. Too much modesty may hinder your possibilities. On the other hand, if you exaggerate, even once, your reader may suspect everything you write is also an exaggeration. Work hard at being a person of integrity.
- Use active verbs to write succinctly and with clarity.
- A letter written in a friendly tone, as opposed to one that is stiff and formal, enables you to say things more clearly and briefly.

### **Tips on Cover Letter Format**

- Keep your cover letter to one page, left aligned and vertically centered on the page.
- Use the same high-quality paper, letterhead, and font on your cover letter as you use on your résumé.
- Show a street address, rather than a post office box, for your return address. This will avoid appearing vague and transient.
- Watch your use of abbreviations. Spell out words such as Street, Circle, Avenue, and degrees (Bachelor of Science).
- Be sure to include the date at the top of the letter.
- **Do not** address the letter "To Whom it May Concern" to avoid giving the impression that you have mass-produced your résumé and cover letters.
- Addressing your letter to "Dear Sir" may be offensive, since many readers are women. If gender is unclear, or if you have been unable to determine who will receive your letter, you may use something like "Dear Human Resources Manager" or "Dear Search Committee."
- Make certain that there are no handwritten updates on the résumé and cover letter.
- A sticky note should never be used as a cover letter.
- Letters sent by e-mail should be brief, telling the reader where you heard about the position and why your qualifications are an excellent fit for the position's requirements. Then, paste your text résumé after your signature line directly on the e-mail message screen instead of just attaching your MS Word file.
- Font size should be from 11-12 point so the reader does not have to strain to read your letter. If necessary, 10-point size may be used if the font is readable and clear.

- Meticulously edit your letters. Ask someone else, and in particular, a career specialist or a career counselor, to proofread them for spelling errors, grammatical errors, typographical errors, and awkward sentence structures.
- Design your letter to look as attractive as possible. Look at the completed letter from a distance to determine if it looks balanced on the page.
- Remember to include your current phone number and e-mail address. It would be most unfortunate to have an employer try to contact you and not be able to do so.
- Be certain that your signature appears on your cover letter. After the closing, it is common to space down four lines before typing your name. Your signature will appear in that space.

**Above all, remember to put the letter and résumé in the envelope. Employers report that they sometimes receive empty envelopes!**

*Information Retrieved From:*  
Oklahoma State University Career Services  
[http://www.osucareerservices.com/careerdevelopment/rr\\_group\\_f/cd\\_rr\\_f2.htm](http://www.osucareerservices.com/careerdevelopment/rr_group_f/cd_rr_f2.htm)  
University of Missouri-Columbia Career Center, *Guide to Business Letters*



## **Writing Resumes**

### **Tips for International Students**

### ***General Guideline***

#### **Review Your Resume /C.V.**

- If English is not your first language you may need to pay particular attention to spelling, grammar, and using appropriate words.
- Have resume reviewed by a career specialist. Ask for explanations about necessary changes in order to ensure that the same mistakes will not happen again.

#### **Selling Yourself**

- Selling yourself and marketing your skills may be unfamiliar to you. If you do not feel able to do this, it is important to seek guidance from a career specialist who can help you to think about your experiences in this way.
- Use your status “an international student” as your unique assets when you demonstrate your qualifications in a Resume/ C.V.

#### **❖ Benefits of Hiring an International Student**

- Diverse cultural background and the ability to speak more languages are especially appealing to companies that are planning to globalize their business.
- Living and studying abroad enables international students to demonstrate a number of skills such as tenacity, responsible risk taking, decision making, and resourcefulness. All of these skills come into play as you successfully master a foreign language and culture.
- Be able to communicate how you have overcome some of the challenges you faced, especially when these types of skills can be directly linked to the skills desired for the position you are seeking.

## **Update Your Resume/ C.V.**

- Update your resume periodically, so you can spend less time on preparing your resume/ C.V. next time when you need it.
- Maintain up-to-date copies of the resume in the format and language of native countries to serve as back-up for employment in home countries or to pass on to contacts.

## ***Specific Tips for Each Session***

### **Personal Identification**

- **Do not** include age, marital status, race, or religion.
- Attached your photographs **only if** specifically requested by the employer.
- **Avoid** listing international permanent addresses especially if an employer can not reach you at that address. Home address should be where you can be contacted easily. It does not have to be your parental address in your home country.
- **You do not need to** mention your visa status on a resume/ C.V. or in a cover letter. Discussions about your visa status will generally take place during the interview process, or an application may have a question about whether you are eligible to work in the U.S.

### **Education**

- Put the most recent and relevant education first.
- List the home school certificate you earned or the degree you were awarded along with the location of the school and the date the program was completed.
- **Do not** try to "translate" your educational experiences for employers. Simply list those experiences and include your most recent experience. For example:
  - “Acceptance at University of Missouri”(This will signal to employers that you have qualifying educational experience)
- **Do not** include Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores. If you are asked to demonstrate your English skills, list:
  - how many years you have studied English, or
  - how many years you have spoken English

### **Work Experience**

- Introduce employers to foreign companies and schools by providing a frame of reference. For example:
  - A \$10 million marketing firm.
  - One of the top five universities in China.

- Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe.
- MIT of Turkey.
- Nigerian version of McDonalds.
- May or may not include completion of military service depending upon whether it is relevant or makes the person a stronger candidate.

### **Relevant Skills**

- Try not to focus too much on factual, background information, such as the nature of the company. This will not get you a job. The employer is particularly interested in seeing evidence of the skills you have developed and experience gained. You may feel uncomfortable ‘selling’ yourself in this way, but it’s what an employer is looking for!
- **Do not** list English as a language skill on a resume written in English for an English speaking country

#### **❖ Limited experience**

You will need to demonstrate how you match the selection criteria and skills required. If you have limited work experience, you may want to use a period of military service, a course project or involvement with university societies to show evidence of these skills.

### **Publications**

- Rather than listing a large number of publications or individual qualifications, it is often clearer to summarize them and only go into detail on the ones that are most relevant to what the employer is looking for.

#### ***Information Retrieved From:***

Owl Online Writing Lab: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p\\_international.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_international.html)

The University of Baltimore Career Center's Online Newsletter:

[http://www.ubalt.edu/careercenter/careerlink/00\\_fall/feature\\_intl\\_resume.html](http://www.ubalt.edu/careercenter/careerlink/00_fall/feature_intl_resume.html)

The University of Chicago Career Advising and Planning Services:

[http://caps.uchicago.edu/overview/faq/international\\_students.html](http://caps.uchicago.edu/overview/faq/international_students.html)



## Writing Thank You Letters

### Tips for International Students

#### **There are several situations that require a thank you letter**

- After an employment interview
- When someone provides you with job search assistance such as referring you to an employer, providing a network contact, or speaking on your behalf to a prospective employer
- After an informational interview, company visit, or other career exploration activity

#### **General Guidelines**

- Write the note on a typewriter or word processor using your letterhead. Avoid sending store-bought thank-you letters.
- Address the note to a particular person who has helped you or rendered a particular service or favor. Use his or her formal name and title on the address line.
- The greeting should reflect the person's formal name ("Dear Mr. Jones"). Use a more informal greeting ("Dear Bob," "Dear Sue") if you are on a familiar basis with the person you are writing to.
- Explain who you are and what the note is about in the first few lines. Make reference to the service or favor that has generated your thank-you note.
- Use professional language throughout the note, but remember to personalize it.
- Keep the note as brief as possible while maintaining a tone of friendliness, especially if you are personally acquainted with the person.
- Close with your formal name and title on the signature line. If you know the person well, sign the note by hand using your first name. Otherwise, sign your full name.
- Enclose your business card if no prior relationship exists with the person you are sending the note to.
- Address the envelope using the recipient's formal name and title

## **Writing Interview Thank you Letters**

- Write in a personal, but professional, style; a positive and confident tone.
- Keep your thank you letters brief and to the point.
- Refer to specific topics you discussed, to remind interviewers who you are among all the candidates.
- Avoid sending thank you letters with misspelled words and grammatical blunders.
- Tailor your thank you letters for each of your interviewers. Interviewers might compare them, so rubber-stamping might not be a good idea. If you attended a group or panel interview, you can send a note to thank them as a group.
- First paragraph: Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you (mention the date). Remind him/her of the position for which you interviewed.
- Second paragraph: Restate your interest in the position and the company/school/organization. Mention something you learned from the interview or comment on something of importance that you discussed. Again, emphasize your strengths, experiences, skills, accomplishments and slant them towards the points that the interviewer considered the most important for the position.
- Third paragraph: Once again, thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration. If appropriate, close with a suggestion for further action (if a second interview is a possibility), or mention that you will follow up with a phone call in a few days. Provide your phone number and the hours you can best be reached.
- If interviewers don't reply to your thank you letters or contact you in any other way after a week or so, send follow-up letters. If you still don't hear back, don't be offended. Although interviewers should have the same professional courtesies they expect of you, it still happens all the time. It's nothing personal. It's just business as usual. But perhaps it's time to focus on the next job opportunity.

## **Thank You Letters by Email**

Email can be a very effective and immediate reminder for a recruiter who is on the road, but it lacks the permanence and formality of a letter.

You may wish to first send an email thank-you in order for the employer to receive it quickly; however, be sure to follow up with a hard copy immediately. Remember, although email might seem less formal, any form of communication should be considered professional correspondence. Make sure your language and tone reflects that standard.

*Information Retrieved from:*

[http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/careereducation/l/aa050503\\_2.htm](http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/careereducation/l/aa050503_2.htm)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_1378\\_write-business-](http://www.ehow.com/how_1378_write-business-)